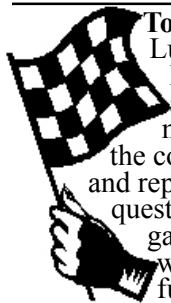


County Line

News from the Government Offices of Lumpkin County, Georgia

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Town Hall Meeting Idea a Winner

Lumpkin County's Town Hall Meeting in January went so well, the Board of Commissioners is planning on doing it again...and again—four times a year, in fact! Eager to demonstrate their commitment to open government, the board's five commissioners invited the community out to hear a thorough state-of-the-county presentation and reports from more than a dozen department heads, followed by a question-and-answer session. Topics fielded from the audience ran the gamut from cell tower regulation, consolidation of city and county water services and public notice of variance requests to public safety funding and short- and long-term plans for the reservoir and surrounding land. Commission Chairman Steve Gooch said the board has made every effort to operate an open and responsive government, but he recognized the transition from a sole commissioner form of government to a five member board of commissioners last year has required some adjustment on everyone's part—especially in terms of communication. County Manager Stan Kelley made suggestions about how citizens can better communicate with their county government on a day-to-day basis. And with input from those in attendance, the Board of Commissioners determined one way to help keep the channels of communication open is to have quarterly Town Hall Meetings. Watch for upcoming dates! In the meantime, remember that meetings of the board of commissioners are open to the public and attending them is a great way to stay informed.

Sudden Impact

When a community is growing as fast as Lumpkin County is growing, the need for services like roads, water and sewer and fire stations can suddenly far outstrip the government's ability to pay for providing them. Additional property taxes brought in by new development typically can't begin to cover the cost of supporting the increased load. Many governments are turning to impact fees as a way to fund projects necessary to accommodate growth. Through impact fees, those who are bringing about, and directly benefiting from, the development pay for certain associated community improvements. Seems reasonable enough, right? But if assessing impact fees seems like a "no-brainer," think again. As with most policies, there are pros and cons, and it turns out developing and implementing fair and legal impact fees can be a rather complicated, lengthy and costly proposition. Members of a public/private committee studying the feasibility of adopting impact fees in Lumpkin County recently were advised by experts that the county needs to develop a capital improvement plan before even considering impact fees.



Play Ball!

Some think of the robin. Others, the daffodils. But in Lumpkin County, it's the Parks and Recreation Department's annual Opening Day festivities that announce the official start of Spring. On the morning of March 25, hundreds of young baseball, softball and soccer players will parade through downtown Dahlonega to the Park & Rec fields for a full day of play. Opening Day festivities, complete with a ceremonial first baseball pitch, will kick off the fun, which will include team games and play activities for the whole family. It's a great community event, and everyone's invited. Watch The Dahlonega Nugget for details or call (706) 864-3622.



On Target: Safety Pays

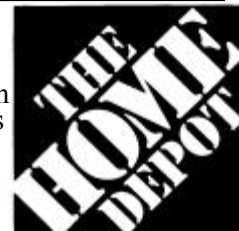
The Lumpkin County government's ongoing promotion of safety in the workplace and use of loss control measures recently have been right on target, earning the county a tidy dividend of just over \$25,000. The dividend is Lumpkin County's share of a \$3 million dividend from the Association County Commissioners of Georgia—Group Self-Insurance Workers' Compensation Fund. It will be returned in the form of a premium credit to be applied toward Lumpkin County's workers' compensation premium for the 2006 policy year. Last fall, the ACCG—Interlocal Risk Management Agency, a property and liability insurance pool for county governments, likewise returned a dividend to the county. That amount was credited to property and liability insurance premiums.



Project Complete:

Home Depot Open

Never mind a ribbon cutting. The world's largest home improvement retailer opened its brand new 102,513 square foot Lumpkin County store with a *board* cutting last month. Lumpkin County commissioners, representatives from Lumpkin County's Development Authority and Water and Sewerage Authority and other local dignitaries were on hand to welcome The Home Depot to its new location at the intersection of GA 400 and Hwy. 60. Besides the obvious benefits (That old kitchen *could* use a fresh look!), there are some powerful reasons to welcome this new company into our community. The store opened with new jobs for 110 full- and part-time associates, most hired from the local economy, and will offer ongoing job opportunities for citizens. In fact, The Home Depot's promise of jobs helped qualify the county for a grant to help fund critical infrastructure. The Home Depot's Services Department also hires local contractors to do installations, providing additional jobs in the contractor community. All told, the store is expected to bring more than a million dollars a year to the county in property, sales and inventory taxes, as well as about \$6 million in new payroll to the area. The Home Depot's Lumpkin County store will have its own volunteer arm, called Team Depot, made up of local associates who will be getting involved in community outreach projects. As part of its kickoff celebration, The Home Depot will be bringing a new playground to the community this summer.



Lumpkin County . . . continued from reverse side

Hear and Be Heard: For Best Results...

Back in the olden days...you know—2004 and earlier—if you had an issue involving county government, you'd just call the sole commissioner or tap him on the shoulder at the local restaurant and ask your question, make your request or get the problem off your chest right then and there. As policy setter and day-to-day administrator for the county, the sole commissioner was the go-to guy. With the change to a multi-commissioner board in 2005, communicating with your government changed, too. New channels of communication were set up to serve the public better and more efficiently. This doesn't mean your county commissioners don't want to hear from you.

They do. It just means, depending on your particular concern, they may not necessarily be the *first stop* or the *best stop* to get the response you seek.

Under our new system of government, the part-time board of commissioners sets policies that guide the general direction of the county—they look at the big picture. The commissioners may only make decisions as a board, by majority rule. A county manager runs the business of county government on a day-to-day basis, putting the policies made by the commissioners into place under the appropriate departments.

Department heads then carry the policies out in their ongoing interactions with citizens and other customers. If you have a question or problem involving county government, start at the department level. Department heads are professionals who are there to help and serve—that hasn't changed. If the department head isn't able to address your concern to your satisfaction, contact Stan Kelley, county manager, who can work with you to resolve



Uncloudy Days... Please!

Blair Housley, Geographic Information Systems manager for Lumpkin County, is hoping for lots of clear skies—and it has to be before the trees leaf out too much. That's because he's sending a company up into the skies over the next several weeks for brand new aerial images of Lumpkin County's 260 square miles. In addition to an up-to-date bird's eye view of homes and buildings, rivers and streams, roads and parking lots, forests and pastures, the project will provide elevation information that will enable the GIS department to create contour maps. The extremely accurate maps that result will show elevations and slopes at two-foot intervals, allowing engineers to calculate things



like where to lay underground water and sewer pipes, power lines and other infrastructure. The county will pick up most of the \$150,000 tab, but the city of Dahlonega and North Georgia College & State University will pay for a portion, too. The information obtained and resulting maps will be used by the county, city and college for planning purposes and shared with the Federal Emergency Management Agency, which will use it to update the county's 15-year-old flood plain maps. It also will be offered for sale to developers and other private users, resulting in cost and time savings for them and a new revenue source for the Lumpkin County GIS Office. Once the final products are available late this year, Blair anticipates being able to recoup the county's investment in about a year and a half.



Have a Ball at County Event Facilities

Want to play ball as a charity fundraiser or have a ball for that special occasion? Lumpkin County's Parks & Recreation Department may be just the spot for your next event. The department has available for rental baseball, softball and multipurpose athletic fields, a recreation center with a regulation basketball court, several indoor multi-purpose rooms (kitchen facilities available), and even a swimming pool, for parties, receptions, reunions, banquets, and other get-togethers. Heads up on some new facility use guidelines: Alcohol and tobacco are prohibited at all Parks & Rec facilities, including the Community Center. For rental fee information and other details, stop by the Park & Rec offices on Riley Road next to Dahlonega City Hall, call (706) 864-3622 or send general questions to the department's new e-mailbox at recmail@lumpkincounty.gov.

most issues. Exceptions include the offices of the tax commissioner, clerk of court, magistrate judge, probate judge, sheriff, coroner and county surveyor, which are managed by the elected officials citizens put into office. Concerns involving those offices must be taken up with the staffs and elected officials in those offices.

If your concerns cannot be adequately addressed at the department level, or if you wish to share your opinion on general policy issues, you are encouraged to contact any or all of your commissioners (they serve the county at-large). They do serve on a part-time basis, so your patience in awaiting response is appreciated. You'll find their e-mail addresses, as well as phone numbers and e-mail addresses for all the county departments and the county manager, on the web site at www.lumpkincounty.gov. Or you can always call the main county office at (706) 864-3742 for help getting in touch with the person best equipped to help you. You may also contact the county manager's office to learn about getting on the agenda to address the board of commissioners formally at a board meeting. Brief comments and questions are taken at the close of monthly board meetings, and the newly instituted quarterly Town Hall Meetings are great ways hear and be heard.



Just Call or Click!

If you have questions or concerns about your county government, answers or assistance are as close as your phone or computer. For contact information for county departments or commissioners, see Dept. and Contact Info., www.lumpkincounty.gov or call (706) 864-3742.

County Commission

Steve Gooch, Chairman
Dr. John Raber, District 1
Deborah Hutcheson, District 2
Clarence Stowers, District 3
Marvin Martin, District 4

Stan Kelley
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